

## CLAIMS

1. A system for awarding a random bonus award, comprising:
  - a gaming machine;
  - a set of bonus awards including at least two bonus awards;
  - 5 a criterion dependent on at least one of a status of a player and/or an action of the player;
  - a selector to select a bonus award at random from the set of bonus awards; and
  - 10 an awardee to deliver the selected bonus award to the player after the player meets the criterion.
2. A system according to claim 1, further comprising a player identifier connected to the gaming machine.
3. A system according to claim 2, wherein the player identifier includes a card reader.
4. A system according to claim 2, wherein the selector is operative to select the bonus award after the player is identified by the player identifier.
- 20 5. A system according to claim 2, wherein the selector is operative to select the bonus award after the player is identified by the player identifier and before the player begins play on the gaming machine.
6. A system according to claim 1, wherein the selector is operative to select the bonus award before the player begins play on the gaming machine.
- 25 7. A system according to claim 1, wherein:
  - the system further comprises an identifier if a bonus session is active; and
  - the selector is operative to select the bonus award only if the identifier indicates that 30 the bonus session is active.
8. A system according to claim 1, wherein the gaming machine includes the awardee.

9. A system according to claim 8, wherein the awarder includes a graphical display.

5 10. A system according to claim 9, wherein the gaming machine includes a primary display used to play the game, the primary display distinct from the graphical display.

10 11. A system according to claim 8, wherein the awarder includes a textual display.

12. A system according to claim 8, wherein the awarder includes:  
an audio message generator for generating an audio message regarding the bonus award; and  
a speaker for outputting the audio message to the player.

15 13. A system according to claim 1, further comprising:  
a bonus server, the bonus server including the criterion and the selector; and  
a network connecting the bonus server and the gaming machine.

20 14. A system according to claim 13, wherein:  
the bonus server further comprises an identifier if a bonus session is active; and  
the selector is operative to select the bonus award only if the identifier indicates that the bonus session is active.

25 15. A system according to claim 13, further comprising a server, the server including a player tracking database and connected to the network.

30 16. A system according to claim 1, further comprising:  
a server, the server including a player tracking database; and  
a network connecting the server, the gaming machine, and the selector.

17. A system according to claim 16, further comprising means for accessing the player tracking database to determine if the player meets the criterion.

18. A system according to claim 1, wherein the set of bonus awards includes at least a first non-default award.

5 19. A system according to claim 18, wherein the set of bonus awards further includes a second non-default award.

20. A system according to claim 18, wherein the set of bonus awards further includes a default award.

10 21. A system according to claim 20, wherein the default award is nothing.

22. A system according to claim 1, wherein the bonus awards in the set of bonus awards are drawn from: cash, credits, and non-monetary awards.

15 23. A method for awarding a random bonus award, comprising:  
identifying a criterion for the selection of a bonus award, the criterion dependent on at least one of a status of a player and/or an action of the player;  
determining that the player meets the criterion;  
20 selecting a bonus award at random from a set of bonus awards including at least two bonus awards; and  
awarding the selected bonus award to the player.

24. A method according to claim 23, wherein identifying a criterion includes identifying the criterion drawn from a set including: an account of the player in a player tracking database is flagged; the player has played for a minimum amount of time; the player has played a minimum amount of coin-in; the player last played within a minimum amount of time; the player has achieved a combination of positive gaming machine outcomes; the player has a minimum number of handlers per trip; the player has a minimum number of handles per unit time; and the player has a minimum amount of continuous play.

30 25. A method according to claim 23, further comprising identifying the player of a gaming machine.

26. A method according to claim 25, wherein:

selecting a bonus award includes selecting the bonus award after the player is identified; and

5 awarding the selected bonus award includes awarding the selected bonus award to the player before the player has begun to play the gaming machine.

27. A method according to claim 23, wherein selecting a bonus award includes selecting a first non-default award from the set of bonus awards.

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28. A method according to claim 27, wherein selecting a bonus award further includes removing the first non-default award from the set of bonus awards.

15 29. A method according to claim 27, wherein selecting a bonus award further includes leaving the first non-default award in the set of bonus awards.

30. A method according to claim 23, wherein selecting a bonus award includes selecting a default award from the set of bonus awards.

20 31. A method according to claim 30, wherein selecting a bonus award further includes leaving the default award in the set of bonus awards.

32. A method according to claim 23, further comprising defining the set of bonus awards to include at least the two bonus awards.

25 33. A method according to claim 32, wherein defining the set of bonus awards includes defining the set of bonus awards to include at least a first non-default award.

30 34. A method according to claim 33, wherein defining the set of bonus awards further includes defining the set of bonus awards to include at least a second non-default award.

35. A method according to claim 33, wherein defining the set of bonus awards further includes defining the set of bonus awards to include at least a default award.

36. A method according to claim 35, wherein defining the set of bonus awards 5 further includes defining the set of bonus awards to include at least the first award and a plurality of default awards in a desired initial ratio.

37. A method according to claim 35, wherein defining the set of bonus awards includes making the default award nothing.

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38. A method according to claim 23, further comprising awarding a consolation award to a second player.

39. A method according to claim 23, wherein determining that a player meets the 15 criterion includes determining that a bonus session is active.

40. A method according to claim 39, wherein determining that a bonus session is active includes:

determining a type of a gaming machine being used by the player; and  
20 determining that a bonus session is active for the type of the gaming machine.

41. A method according to claim 40, wherein identifying a bonus award includes selecting the bonus award at random from a set of bonus awards associated with the bonus session for the type of gaming machine.

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42. A method according to claim 39, wherein awarding the selected bonus award to the player includes awarding the selected bonus award to the player if the bonus session is active.

30 43. A method according to claim 23, wherein awarding the selected bonus award to the player includes:

receiving a message about the selected bonus award at a gaming machine in use by the player;

verifying at the gaming machine that the player still satisfies the criterion; and  
awarding the selected bonus award to the player by the gaming machine if the gaming  
machine verifies that the player still meets the criterion for the bonus award.

5        44. A method according to claim 43, further comprising returning the selected  
bonus award to the set of bonus awards if the gaming machine fails to verify that the player  
still meets the criterion for the bonus award.

10      45. A method according to claim 23, wherein awarding the selected bonus award  
to the player includes notifying the player of the selected bonus award.

46. A method according to claim 45, wherein notifying the player of the selected  
bonus award includes displaying a text message to the user.

15      47. A method according to claim 46, wherein displaying a text message includes  
displaying the selected bonus award in the text message.

48. A method according to claim 45, wherein notifying the player of the selected  
bonus award includes presenting an audio announcement.

20      49. A method according to claim 45, wherein notifying the player of the selected  
bonus award includes presenting a video announcement.

50. A method according to claim 49, wherein presenting a video announcement  
25 includes simulating the random selection of the selected bonus award.

51. A method according to claim 49, wherein presenting a video announcement  
includes presenting an audio announcement.

30      52. A method according to claim 49, wherein presenting a video announcement  
includes presenting the video announcement on a primary display of the gaming machine.

53. A method according to claim 49, wherein presenting a video announcement includes presenting the video announcement on a secondary display of the gaming machine.

54. A method according to claim 45, wherein notifying the player of the selected bonus award includes notifying the player of the selected bonus award if the selected bonus award is anything other than a default award of nothing.

55. A method according to claim 23, further comprising identifying the player as having received the selected bonus award.

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56. A method according to claim 55, wherein identifying the player as having received the selected bonus award includes identifying the player in a player tracking database as having received the selected bonus award.

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57. A method according to claim 23, further comprising expiring the selected bonus award for the player if a condition is met, the condition drawn from a set including: a time limit; an arrival of an end of the bonus session; and the player ending play.

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58. A computer-readable medium containing a program to award a random bonus award, comprising:

software to identify a criterion for the selection of a bonus award, the criterion dependent on at least one of a status of a player and/or an action of the player;

software to determine that the player meets the criterion;

25 software to select a bonus award at random from a set of bonus awards including at least two bonus awards; and

software to award the selected bonus award to the player.

30 59. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, wherein the software to identify a criterion includes software to identify the criterion drawn from a set including: an account of the player in a player tracking database is flagged; the player has played for a minimum amount of time; the player has played a minimum amount of coin-in; an account of the player in a player tracking database is flagged; the player has played for a minimum amount of time; the player has played a minimum amount of coin-in;

the player last played within a minimum amount of time; the player has achieved a combination of positive gaming machine outcomes; the player has a minimum number of handlers per trip; the player has a minimum number of handles per unit time; and the player has a minimum amount of continuous play.

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60. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, the program further comprising software to identify the player of a gaming machine.

61. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 60,  
10 wherein:

the software to select a bonus award includes software to select the bonus award after the player is identified; and

the software to award the selected bonus award includes software to award the selected bonus award to the player before the player has begun to play the gaming machine.

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62. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, wherein the software to select a bonus award includes software to select a first non-default award from the set of bonus awards.

20 63. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 62, wherein the software to select a bonus award further includes software to remove the first non-default award from the set of bonus awards.

25 64. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 62, wherein the software to select a bonus award further includes software to leave the first non-default award in the set of bonus awards.

30 65. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, wherein the software to select a bonus award includes software to select a default award from the set of bonus awards.

66. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 65, wherein the software to select a bonus award further includes software to leave the default award in the set of bonus awards.

5 67. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, the program further comprising software to define the set of bonus awards to include at least the two bonus awards.

10 68. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 67, wherein the software to define the set of bonus awards includes software to define the set of bonus awards to include at least a first non-default award.

15 69. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 68, wherein the software to define the set of bonus awards further includes software to define the set of bonus awards to include at least a second non-default award.

70. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 68, wherein the software to define the set of bonus awards further includes software to define the set of bonus awards to include at least a default award.

20 71. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 70, wherein the software to define the set of bonus awards further includes software to define the set of bonus awards to include at least the first award and a plurality of default awards in a desired initial ratio.

25 72. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 70, wherein the software to define the set of bonus awards includes software to make the default award nothing.

30 73. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, the program further comprising software to award a consolation award to a second player.

74. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, wherein the software to determine that a player meets the criterion includes software to determine that a bonus session is active.

5 75. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 74, wherein the software to determine that a bonus session is active includes:  
software to determine a type of a gaming machine being used by the player; and  
software to determine that a bonus session is active for the type of the gaming machine.

10 76. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 75, wherein the software to identify a bonus award includes software to select the bonus award at random from a set of bonus awards associated with the bonus session for the type of gaming machine.

15 77. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 74, wherein the software to award the selected bonus award to the player includes software to award the selected bonus award to the player if the bonus session is active.

20 78. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, wherein the software to award the selected bonus award to the player includes:  
software to receive a message about the selected bonus award at a gaming machine in use by the player;  
software to verify at the gaming machine that the player still satisfies the criterion;  
25 and  
software to award the selected bonus award to the player by the gaming machine if the gaming machine verifies that the player still meets the criterion for the bonus award.

30 79. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 78, the program further comprising software to return the selected bonus award to the set of bonus awards if the gaming machine fails to verify that the player still meets the criterion for the bonus award.

80. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, wherein the software to award the selected bonus award to the player includes software to notify the player of the selected bonus award.

5 81. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 80, wherein the software to notify the player of the selected bonus award includes software to display a text message to the user.

10 82. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 81, wherein the software to display a text message includes software to display the selected bonus award in the text message.

15 83. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 80, wherein the software to notify the player of the selected bonus award includes software to present an audio announcement.

84. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 80, wherein the software to notify the player of the selected bonus award includes software to present a video announcement.

20 85. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 84, wherein the software to present a video announcement includes software to simulate the random selection of the selected bonus award.

25 86. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 84, wherein the software to present a video announcement includes software to present an audio announcement.

30 87. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 84, wherein the software to present a video announcement includes software to present the video announcement on a primary display of the gaming machine.

88. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 84, wherein the software to present a video announcement includes software to present the video announcement on a secondary display of the gaming machine.

5 89. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 80, wherein the software to notify the player of the selected bonus award includes software to notify the player of the selected bonus award if the selected bonus award is anything other than a default award of nothing.

10 90. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, the program further comprising software to identify the player as having received the selected bonus award.

15 91. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 90, wherein the software to identify the player as having received the selected bonus award includes software to identify the player in a player tracking database as having received the selected bonus award.

20 92. A computer-readable medium containing a program according to claim 58, the program further comprising software to expire the selected bonus award for the player if a condition is met, the condition drawn from a set including: a time limit; an arrival of an end of the bonus session; and the player ending play.